



**For Immediate Release**

Monday, August 8, 2016

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## **State Business Enterprise Program Launches New Paperless Certification Program**

*System provides faster, more efficient service to minority, women, veterans and persons with disabilities owned businesses*

CHICAGO – Acting Director Michael M. Hoffman of the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) and the State of Illinois' Business Enterprise Program (BEP) are proud to announce the launch of a new, web-based certification management system. This new paperless system is accessible to all minority, female, persons with disabilities, and veteran-owned businesses seeking certification with the State of Illinois. This transition away from paper-based certification will provide a faster and more efficient service when conducting business with the State of Illinois.

“Certification with BEP will create new opportunities for minority-owned businesses to grow and succeed. Making it easier and more convenient for businesses to certify with BEP is one important step CMS is taking to increase the number of BEP certified businesses and to ensure that state purchasing reflects the great diversity of the Illinois business community,” said Acting Director Hoffman.

The new BEP certification portal will improve user experience, offering vendors the following key benefits:

- The elimination of the need to submit multiple paper-based forms
- Automated online application process
- Real time certification status and updates
- Enhanced online BEP, VBP Directory, with key-word search capabilities and National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP) codes
- Ability to migrate data and receive certifications data from CTA, City of Chicago and Cook County governments

On July 13, 2016, Governor Bruce Rauner issued Executive Order 2016-08 to ensure equal opportunity is provided to all Illinois businesses. This new online program will help increase access for vendors and ensure that the program meets best practices.

To help vendors register and learn how to navigate the new portal, CMS will host a training workshop on Tuesday, August 30, 2016, from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm at 100 W. Randolph Street, Chicago. Vendors may also register for other training opportunities by visiting the portal.

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The BEP online certification portal can be accessed at [www.opportunities.illinois.gov](http://www.opportunities.illinois.gov). Vendors interested in certifying with BEP can learn more by calling (312) 814-4190 or 1 (800) 356-9206, or by emailing [BEP.CMS@illinois.gov](mailto:BEP.CMS@illinois.gov).

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